

## LINKING THEORY AND PRACTICES OF SUSTAINABLE ENTERPRISE: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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### Abstract

*Becoming a company categorized as an excellent sustainable enterprise is the goal of many companies in this era of sustainability demands. Many companies are trying to achieve this, but few have lost their way because there is a scarcity of clear and comprehensive indicators. This paper examines redefining sustainable enterprises and compiling a list of enterprise sustainability indicators based on a literature review. This study's integrative literature study method consists of a systematic literature review and a complimentary article. To the best of our knowledge, this literature review is the first to be conducted in the context of sustainable enterprise in Indonesia regarding various aspects of sustainability. In order to support a contemporary definition of sustainable enterprise, a comprehensive set of indicators should be developed. This paper presents a redefinition of sustainable enterprise and a list of sustainable enterprise indicators. At the end of this paper, several managerial implications and future agendas are also discussed.*

**Keywords:** Literature Review, Sustainability, Sustainable Enterprise, Sustainable Enterprise Indicators

### Introduction

Many enterprises have started engaging sustainability as their achievement in recent years (Shrivastava et al., 2013). However, in academic circles, the debate often revolves around basic concepts but forgets a little about how the model of a company can be sustainable (Zollo et al., 2013). This phenomenon is in line with what was expressed by Anbarasan and Sushil (2018) that the debate between academics, consultants, and company executives resulted in many definitions of conducting business. Despite efforts to answer these issues in various disciplines (Zollo et al., 2013). This effort is estimated to have existed for more than two decades among scholars. However, the fundamental challenge is that understanding many enterprise sustainability challenges is not global or holistic (Shrivastava et al., 2013).

We live in a crisis society where most major economic, ecological, social, political, and cultural systems have broken down. Sustainability and sustainable development have been proposed as solutions to bring us out of a crisis. (Shrivastava and Ivanaj, 2011). From a business perspective, sustainability [is] a "company's ability to achieve its business goals and increase long-term shareholder value by integrating economic, environmental and social opportunities into its business strategies" (Wirtenberg, 2007). A sustainable enterprise must care about its stakeholders, but focusing on society alone is not enough (Ketprapakorn and Kantabutra). The changes called for inevitably disrupting business practices during the transformation of production and consumption systems. (Ren and Jackson, 2020). Sustainable enterprise development has three dimensions: (i) social sustainability, (ii) economic sustainability, and (iii) environmental sustainability (Jiatong, 2021; Liczmańska-Kopcewicz, 2019; and Tan, 2010). By addressing holistic and sustainable performance management and identifying elements and interactions of all perspectives, a new dimension to the theory of a sustainable organization can be added (Anbarasan and Sushil, 2018). It is hoped that the development of theory will also be balanced with its application at a practical level to provide more relevant guidance to current developments.

Many things must be paid attention to at the technical level by referring to globally applicable standards, including the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). Then these criteria are developed into assessments (Edgeman, 2013). Policymakers, governments, organizations, and communities will be confused when determining the definition of sustainable enterprise without the support of academic research because the definition becomes opaque, ambiguous, and skewed. Among the examples of aspects that are part of sustainability are Human Resources. As revealed (Wirtenberg, 2007), HR plays a role in supporting sustainability achievement while (Cho, 2019) links HR to the creation of innovation in the enterprise.

However, it is not an easy thing to implement a sustainability program in an enterprise. There is a possibility that managers may feel that they have carried out practices that result in sustainability when, in reality, they are incomplete, insignificant, or even not occurring at all, resulting in sustainability, but if in the opposite direction, unsustainable practices. Furthermore, most managers are focused on organizationally specific issues, those that are part of their professional responsibilities. So they do not have the time to read publications by researchers on the development of sustainable enterprises (Shrivastava et al., 2013).

In other situations, many companies want to become sustainable enterprises, but they do not know how to obtain them. As Wheeler (2005) suggested in his article, it may be necessary to formalize this process and make a sustainability learning center/academy to facilitate this process. The knowledge for sustainability decision-making needs to transcend private interests to achieve the common good (Shrivastava et al., 2013). In this article, Sweet (2003) also emphasizes the importance of processing this information in decision-making (Sweet, 2003). Knowledge sharing is essential in sustainable enterprise literature, as it promotes innovation among organizations (Kantabutra, 2019). A sustainable enterprise prioritizes the development of knowledge, creativity, analytical skills, and the retention of knowledge to achieve long-term competitive advantage (Liczmańska-Kopcewicz, 2019). Arts can teach enterprises many things, such as innovation, systemic thinking, improvisation, resilience, and conflict resolution (Shrivastava and Ivanaj, 2011).

In order to establish eco-sustainability during this recessionary period, it is necessary to adopt a blended perspective that combines three steps to begin: reflection on value, relationships, and shaping of change (Sekerka and Stimel, 2011). Mohapatra and Verma (2018) furthermore, by employing historical data and biographical methods, trace the history of Tata to examine the relationship between spirituality and sustainable business under the influence of stakeholder concept, sustainability, and family values-based leadership. Every enterprise must have its conditions and characteristics, so it is also essential to pay attention to the context in viewing and implementing sustainability. According to Kennelly and Bradley (2005), Ireland has an entrepreneurial culture characterized by self-confidence, creativity, and entrepreneurialism. On the other hand, every organization faces a unique set of conditions (Shrivastava and Berger, 2010). Keijzers (2002) highlights that private enterprise shifts from environmentally friendly production methods towards truly sustainable entrepreneurship, dealing both with quality and volume aspects of natural capital.

## Methods

Since there are so many definitions and concepts of sustainable enterprises and their popularity is growing, it is necessary to analyze their scope and how they are defined. Reviewing various literature that addresses sustainable companies is one way that can be done to analyze sustainable companies within a corporate framework. The literature review is generally divided into three: systematic literature review, semi-systematic literature review, and an integrative literature review. In this study, we use a combination of systematic literature review and integrative literature review methods. A review of the literature can be carried out to synthesize research to form a systematic, transparent, and reproducible view following the standards of understanding of many parties (Davis et al., 2014). The analysis was carried out in conducting a literature review on this type of research. In this case, we use the type of research carried out on the interpretation and analysis of the reasons for the research to emerge or on the analysis that is not only carried out on the object, but also carried out an in-depth analysis of the motivation, goals, and relationship patterns of the object of the research study (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

The literature review process carried out by us consists of four stages. The first stage is to make a review design, which includes determining the theme of the study to be reviewed and searching for literature related to the research study. The strategies carried out in this phase include determining the keywords or terminology used to search for literature that is directly related (Macke & Genari, 2019). At this stage, we conducted a literature search through the Web of Science website using the formula TS=("SUSTAINABLE ENTERPRISE") and Review Articles or Articles (Document Types) and 2021 or 2020 or 2019 or 2018 or 2017 (Publication Years) and English (Languages) using the keywords "Sustainable Enterprise". The search process brought up 228 articles containing the keywords "Sustainable" and "Enterprise." The selection process is carried out again to produce articles that match the keywords. Based on the titles and abstracts of the 228 articles, 23 articles were selected, corresponding to the research's keywords and studies. In addition, the argument was strengthened by finding nine additional articles related to "Sustainability" and "Sustainable Reporting" that can be used as comparison materials and additional perspectives related to the topic under study. Thus, a total of 32 articles were selected. The next stage in the literature review process is to conduct a review process of the selected literature. In the review process, we carried out the initial stages by focusing on several criteria, such as research methods, approaches taken, and the theory used. During this process, screening of the criteria has been done in order to adjust to the core and focus of our research.

We continue the review process by classifying the literature according to the criteria and then a comprehensive screening. The review process is also a selection and sorting for the literature to be included in the analysis process (Snyder, 2019). In this case, we reviewed 69 articles to see the concept of "Sustainable

Enterprise" from the perspective of these articles. After reviewing the available literature, we conducted an analysis. In this case, each abstract from the selected article we analyzed related to the author, research approach, theory used, and conclusions from the literature. The analysis in the literature review must also pay attention to the abstract content to ensure the literature is of good quality (Snyder, 2019). In conducting the analysis, we focus on analyzing the concept of "Sustainable Enterprise." Based on the analysis of these articles, there are several definitions of Sustainable Enterprise. A company's performance is also evaluated based on organizational management, annual reporting, employee culture, and other criteria relevant to a sustainable business. The last phase in the literature review is to verify the results of the review before then writing or explaining the results of the selected article review. In this case, it is necessary to pay attention to the delivery process, which must be carried out communicatively and easy to understand. Usually, every report on the review results has its standards or guidelines (Wong et al., 2013; Torraco, 2006). In this case, we write down the findings of a sustainable company in terms of management based on analyzing empirical evidence, comparing and juxtaposing information from the various articles.

## **Result and Discussion**

The following literature review shows a predominance of exploratory studies and some difficulties in conceptualization, as well as different terminologies to link sustainability and Enterprise. Here we use sustainable enterprise as our main keywords in most of the references. Meanwhile, in the literature, it can be found the use of other terms in this context. In this section we will focus on discussing the definition and indicators of a sustainable enterprise.

### **Definition of Sustainable Enterprise**

The definition of sustainable enterprise has been formulated in various commercial, anthropocentric, and environmental approaches. Each of the approaches does not stand separately so that enterprises should pay attention to all those integrated approaches. Otherwise, they may not have a competitive advantage in the market. The following table shows a collection of enterprise sustainability definitions from any approach (Yen et al., 2018).

Table 1 Definition of Sustainable Enterprise

No.	Source	Definition	Keyword(s)
1	(Danubianu & Teodorescu, 2017).	Sustainable enterprise is an organization that can expect and meet the desire of current and future generations of individuals and stakeholders by making and innovating new business strategies that accelerate positive social change and preserve ecological integrity as well as improving business performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● meet the desire of current and future generations</li> <li>● making and innovating new business strategies</li> <li>● accelerate positive social change</li> <li>● reserve ecological integrity</li> <li>● improving business performance.</li> </ul>
2	Schaltegger, S., & Burritt, R. (2018).	Sustainable enterprise development is defined as the enterprise ability to meet the stakeholder's current needs without compromising on fulfilling their future needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ability</li> <li>● meeting the stakeholder's current needs</li> <li>● without compromising on fulfilling future needs</li> </ul>
3	(Bansal et al., 2019; Rahdari et al., 2016).	sustainable enterprise development is the procedure to develop shareholders' worth by economic, social, and environmental perfection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● procedure to develop</li> <li>● shareholders' worth by economic, social, and environmental perfection</li> </ul>
4	(Elkington & Rowlands, 1999).	Sustainable enterprise development is also called a triple bottom line because it not only focuses on economic sustainability and productivity; it also focuses on social, economic, and environmental sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● not only focuses on economic sustainability and productivity</li> <li>● also focuses on social, economic, and environmental sustainability</li> </ul>
5	Ali et.al, (2020)	every enterprise must accomplish financial targets without harming society and the environment (Ali et al., 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● accomplish financial targets</li> <li>● without harming society and the environment</li> </ul>
6	The World Guide to Sustainable Enterprise (Tafra-Vlahović, 2016)	Sustainable enterprise as any business, large or small, that integrates sustainability and responsibility, which includes value creation, good governance, societal contribution and ecological integrity, into its strategy, operations and products, to have a transformational, positive impact on the greatest social and environmental challenge that we	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● integrates sustainability and responsibility</li> <li>● includes value creation, good governance, societal contribution and ecological integrity, into its strategy, operations and products</li> <li>● transformational, positive impact on</li> </ul>

Adapted from : Anbarasan and Sushil (2018) and Jiatong et.al (2021)

All of the definitions mentioned by prior literature implied similar essence and show interaction among the three approaches. A sustainable enterprise is a business that implements a sustainable business process that harmonizes economic, environmental, and social factors. It consumes current assets to generate an equal or more amount of those assets so that other people can iterate such consumption in the future.

### Indicators of Sustainable Enterprise

Generally, the sustainability of an enterprise comprises three primary dimensions, namely Economic, Social, and Environment. It refers to the basic concept of the triple bottom line, which tells that an enterprise should pay attention to economic performance and its social and environmental ones. In other words, they should consider all stakeholders other than shareholders too (Papoutsis and Sodhi, 2020).

As the current world's agenda, SDGs also defined sustainability into some parts, with additional dimensions, namely governance. Meanwhile, the United Nations classified sustainability into four categories: human rights, labor, environment, and anti-corruption (Post, 2013). However, those are only classifications. The content shows strong similarities among them.

Furthermore, each dimension consists of several indicators for measurement purposes. Those indicators are developed over the years through many empirical types of research which contributed to standard-setting conducted by some organizations such as Global Reporting Initiatives (GRI), Task Force on Climate Finance Disclosure (TCFD), International Integrated Reporting Framework (IIRF), Communication on Progress (COP), Sustainable Banking Assessment (SUSBA), and each country regulation (Beelitz, 2015). To sum up, sustainability performance dimensions are represented by the following detailed indicators:

#### Economically Sustainable Enterprise

An enterprise can be called sustainable from economic aspects if It can embrace the following criteria in Its business process:

Table 2 Economic Indicators for Sustainable Enterprise

Economic Indicators
1. Contribute to national and global economy
2. State of domestic and global economy
3. Achieve financial growth
4. Implement funding collection
5. Do investment on sustainable financial product

Several industries are urged to optimize its' economic sustainability due to their high market competitiveness and low cooperation, such as electronic equipment manufacturers, professional services, biotechnology, Insurance, and mining (Kumar, Connell and Bhattacharyya, 2021).

#### Environmentally Sustainable Enterprise

Previous studies have identified the essential sectors of real estate development and construction, aerospace, defense, energy, mining, and other industries with a high environmental profile. Therefore, they should pay more attention to the following indicators (Shrivastava and Berger, 2010; Roca and Searcy, 2012; Post, 2013; Papoutsis and Sodhi, 2020).

Table 3 Environmental Indicators for Sustainable Enterprise

Environmental Indicators
1. Account for biodiversity
2. Assess/evaluate suppliers
3. Being lean
4. Certify to ISO 14001 standard Do product stewardship
5. Collaborate with suppliers
6. Co-locate the operations
7. Comply with transportation safety
8. Conduct green/environmental conscious manufacturing
9. Conduct product lifecycle assessment (LCA)
10. Conduct reverse logistics
11. Decentralize/localize physical assets in multiple locations
12. Harvest water
13. Plant trees
14. Procure environmentally sustainably
15. Recycle waste
16. Reduce carbon footprint
17. Reduce consumption of materials
18. Reduce energy consumption
19. Reduce fuel consumption
20. Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions
21. Reduce NOx and Sox emissions
22. Reduce replenishment frequency
23. Reduce waste production
24. Reduce water consumption Reduce packaging
25. Remanufacture
26. Response to oil spills
27. Reuse materials/resources/products
28. Source locally
29. Toxics release inventory
30. Use alternative modes of transportation
31. Use eco-friendly materials (non-toxic)
32. Use eco-friendly routes
33. Use recyclable/ed materials
34. Use recycling waste
35. Use renewable energy
36. Utilize increased transportation capacity
37. Vertically integrate operations

#### Socially Sustainable Enterprise

Social dimensions put most focus on human rights and labor. Enterprises that are highly recommended to optimize their social sustainability are, for example, a diversified-consumer service provider, biotechnology, water utilities, etc. (Ravetz et al., 2018; Kumar, Connell and Bhattacharyya, 2021).

Table 4 Social Indicators for Sustainable Enterprise

Social Indicators
1. Adopt safer warehousing conditions
2. Commit to employees
3. Diversity for employees
4. Engage employees
5. Ensure better working conditions
6. Establish supplier code of conducts
7. Implement community activities
8. Minimize (eliminate/eradicate) child labor
9. Source responsibly
10. Train and educate employees
11. Train on anti-corruption
12. Use health-and-safety programs
13. Awareness/Education/training
14. Collaboration/partnership
15. Democratic processes/role of youth, women and marginalized populations
16. Human rights/Quality of life
17. Information/communication/community relations
18. Local perspective
19. Overpopulation
20. Safety (human)

### Governance Sustainably Enterprise

Governance is highly related to how an enterprise organizes its resources to operate the business. Therefore, this dimension needs to be embraced by all enterprises, unexceptionally (Ravetz et al., 2018).

Table 5 Governance Indicators for Sustainable Enterprise

Governance Indicators
1. Set Corporate Strategies & Policies
2. Implement Risk management
3. Corporate/Directors' Profile
4. Do Contingency planning/risk management/precautionary principle
5. Have Long-term vision/multigenerational thinking
6. Need to integrate three pillars (economic, financial, social)
7. Comply Regulatory frameworks
8. Have Responsibility
9. Do Self-evaluation/evaluation/certification

### Ranking of Sustainable Enterprise

Enterprise sustainability performance is measured to inform public or enterprise stakeholders about the enterprise's sustainability performance. The stakeholders, of course, have specific and various interests in the corporation. Thus they may see sustainability performance from a particular dimension too. For example, shareholders may pay more attention to economic sustainability. At the same time, the local community may be interested in the enterprise's environmental concerns (Harymawan et al., 2020).

Any perspective can undertake the measurement itself. The enterprise itself can gauge it through any form of reporting, such as sustainability, annual, or even integrated reports. Third parties can also do measurements based on several criteria on statistical databases such as Environment. These Social and Governance (ESG) scores are provided by public platforms like Bloomberg, Thomson Reuters, and many others (Papoutsis and Sodhi, 2020).

Based on a set of assessments, the enterprise can be ranked with the following criterion (Landrum and Ohsowski, 2018):

Table 6 Sustainable Enterprise Rankings

Rank #	Name	Rate of Sustainability	Description
1	Coevolutionary	Very Strong	firms understand the place of humans, corporations and societies as existing in partnership with the natural world, giving as much as receiving.
2	Regenerative	Strong	firms understand sustainability science and seek to repair the damage of an industrial-era consumer society.
3	Systemic	Intermediate	firms work with others integrating the full realm of sustainability activities (environmental, economic and social) to address systemic change.
4	Business-Centered	Weak	firms engage in egocentric internally focused activities that result in benefit to the firm..
5	Compliance	Very Weak	firms engage in activities which are externally enforced

### Managerial Implication and Future Agenda

Several managerial implications of the results of this literature study guide companies in determining what sustainability programs will be carried out according to the development of current demands. The implementation of this indicator is not only for large companies to reach and attract investors but can also be carried out by companies of any scale and form as a form of shared responsibility as inhabitants of the earth.

We also suggest that more empirical research is needed to prove the concept from various corporate contexts to enrich studies in this area for future agendas. Another suggestion, as expressed by Shrivastava et al. (2013), transdisciplinarity provides solutions for certain real-life cases beyond the academic and practitioner gap limit.

### Conclusion

The objective of this study is to do systematic review on sustainable enterprise research and propose a new definition and set of indicators. Based on the current study results, it is clear that further study employing thematic, contextual, theoretical, and methodological perspectives are necessary, which indicates that sustainable enterprises are still in the process of development. Consequently, this study should serve as a valuable resource for researchers, academics, as well as practitioners. Furthermore, this study contributes to the field by offering a more comprehensive review of enterprise sustainability indicators from various aspects and proposing a future research agenda. This study also provides valuable insights for anyone who is willing to move to or already working on this domain. Lastly, the present study expects to make theoretical and practical contributions to Sustainable Enterprise studies in general, and related stakeholders specifically.

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